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AP European History

Unification of Italy and Germany FRQ

Metternich vs. Bismarck: **Foreign Policy Goals and Achievements**

Metternich, the Austrian Prince, and Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister, have foreign policies that determine the political success of their countries. Metternich runs the Congress of Vienna creating a 39 state German Confederation, while Bismarck unites most of Germany to create the 2nd Reich. Metternich’s conservative and anti-liberalism views clash with Bismarck’s nationalistic views of a strong and united Germany.

Klemens von Metternich, one of the leaders of the Congress of Vienna, creates a balance of power by instituting a thirty-nine state German Confederation with Austria as the leader. With deterring nationalism as his main goal, Metternich forbids the formation of any nationalist groups within the Confederation, enacting the Carlsbad Decrees, dissolving the young nationalist Burschenschaften. After the establishment of the Congress of Vienna by Metternich, the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle removes all foreign troops from France and creates a clean slate after the horrific revolutions. The Congresses of Troppau, Laibach, and Verona all contribute towards Metternich’s ideal of legitimacy, a conservative Europe with the old regime reinstituted. Metternich’s foreign policies also supported countries intervening with revolts against legitimate rulers in other countries within Europe, as long as they withdraw once order is restored. Metternich’s goals of a conservative Europe were shown in the achievements of the Congress of Vienna with the formation of the loosely associated German Confederation.

By uniting most of Germany, Otto von Bismarck creates a balance of power that prevents war in Europe until World War I. As a prime example of Realpolitik, Bismarck uses Machiavellian policies to achieve his goals, such as gaining power through practical solutions rather than doing what is morally or religiously acceptable. Bismarck does whatever it takes to achieve his goals even if it involves immoral actions such as stealing or cheating allies. After the failed 1848 revolutions, Bismarck states that he will use “iron and blood,” or military actions to achieve his goals. After defeating Austria and France in the Austrio-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars, Bismarck negotiates with the German nations to create a unified German Empire. Bismarck has to deal with a hostile France looking for vengeance against Germany after being defeated, so he intervenes with France’s negotiations with other countries to make sure nobody allies with them. Bismarck makes alliances and treaties with neighboring countries to prevent war, such as the Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary and the Triple Alliance with Italy.

Bismarck and Metternich’s foreign policies shared common goals but had different outcomes, depending on the methods they used. Both Metternich and Bismarck wanted their countries to strengthen, and desired strong monarchies to control their homeland. Although they shared a common goal for their countries to succeed, Metternich was a conservative who opposed liberalism while Bismarck promoted liberalist views and used Realpolitik actions. Metternich was more focused on destroying the nationalistic ideas of the French Revolution while Bismarck wanted to unite Germany at all costs. Whether through wars or treaties, both Metternich and Bismarck achieved their goals of stable and successful countries by the end of their political careers.